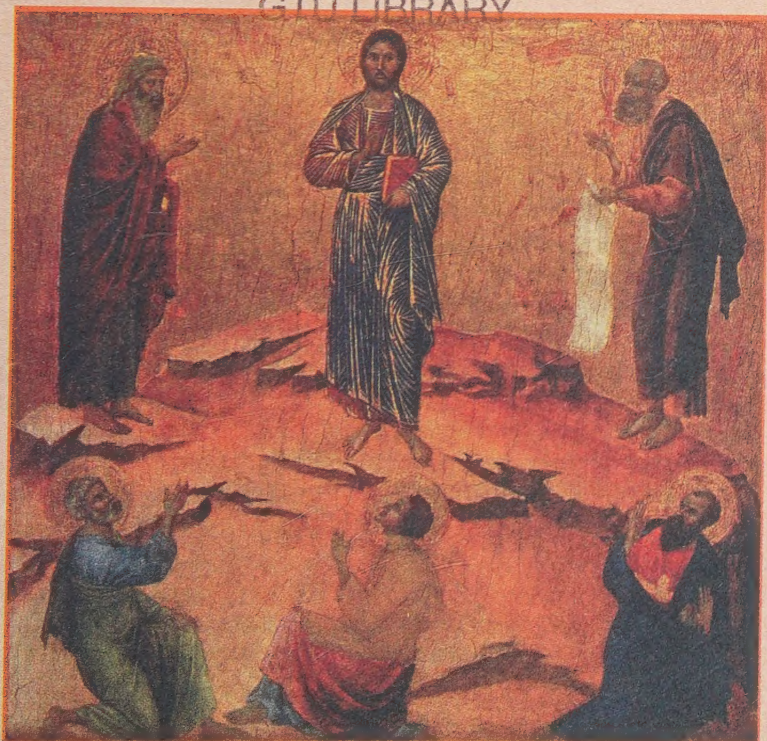


The Anglican Digest

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THE ANGLICAN DIGEST

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Psalm 126

"It seemed like a dream, too good to be true, when God returned Zion's exiles. We laughed, we sang, we couldn't believe our good fortune. We were the talk of the nations – 'God was wonderful to them!' God was wonderful to us; we are one happy people. And now, God, do it again – bring rains to our drought-stricken lives so those who planted their crops in despair will shout hurrahs at the harvest, so those who went off with heavy hearts will come home laughing, with arm loads of blessing."

Psalm 126 – THE MESSAGE

by Eugene H Peterson

Over the years when I have found myself in drought-stricken periods in my prayer life and in need of renewal, I have often turned to the Psalms for help. They have an extraordinary way of nourishing and providing us with direction on how to speak and listen to God at various stages of need.

In many ways, this ancient collection of verses is like a catalogue of our requests, hopes, fears, confessions, and

praises to and for God. If we will allow them, the Psalms can give renewed voice to our hopes and dreams in prayer to God and shape our interior life.

I hope you will find the above translation of Psalm 126 by Eugene Peterson to be as helpful as I have. As Peterson shares with us, we can see this Psalm is a song of thanksgiving, but quickly it becomes a prayer for help and blessing, too. Scholars tell us this Psalm is most likely a pilgrimage song for the children of Israel in the sixth century BC and speaks of God's restoration of Israel to Jerusalem after years of displacement in an alien land.

Psalm 126 is lively and almost dancing in its description of going home after the exile. The experience of abandonment and now restoration seems to inspire the psalmist to a renewed trust in God's faithfulness. I am reminded of the prayer Saint Paul offers in Philippians 1:6, "God, who began the good work within you, will con-

tinue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again." Restoration is indeed a part of the good work that God initiates and completes in our lives.

It seems to me that many of us are in need of restoration or renewal. Looking back, like the psalmist, I find it is helpful to learn from our successes in life and try to apply them to current needs. Take a moment and consider a few of the restorations that may have occurred during your lifetime — between business associates, between adult children, between husbands and wives, between warring church members. What were some of those strategies that brought about restoration to the scenarios you've named?

Take a few minutes and re-read Psalm 126 slowly. Consider writing down your present needs in terms of renewal or restoration in life. In other words, write down what is heavy on your heart right now and ask God to lead you home renewed and

laughing with an arm load of blessings.

God restores us to wholeness in many ways in this life, whether physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual. However, as most of us have learned in prayer, God hears our pleas, but we are the only ones who can take those first steps to begin the journey.

We see how God's saving help moved through the most unlikely of folks such as King Cyrus who allowed God's people to return home. God indeed uses leaders, time, politics, and conquerors to achieve the larger purpose of restoration.

Finally, just the sheer anticipation of returning home to a familiar place in our journey, a fresh start, a new beginning with God and neighbor is the joy which makes this life complete. My prayer is that each of us may be renewed in our trust of God's faithfulness and love.

— *The Rev. Mark L. Fitzhugh,
Christ Church,
Greenwich, Connecticut*

Get a Life!

That is a phrase often heard and often meant as a negative assertion rather than a positive suggestion. Getting a life can be one of the most rewarding aspects of living. After all, giving life is exactly what Jesus came to do. Sadly, many Christians don't see their life of faith that way. They see their life of faith as that of doing the best they can with who they are and what they have been given in life. That's part of living, but if that is all there is to it, one really does need to find out what life is really all about.

Jesus said that he came to give life and to give it abundantly (John 10:10). Too many of us have settled for a less than abundant life in Christ. We may have an abundance of finances or physical strength or of family, friends, and health. But that's only a small part of what Jesus talks about. We can have all that and still not know real living. Humanly speaking, real living only comes from Jesus. As Paul says so simply, it is

Christ who is our life (Colossians 3:4).

The degree to which we worry about that over which we have no control is the degree to which we are not living an abundant life in Christ. No matter what our station or status or problems or difficulties, Jesus can make us different in the midst of them. Nothing happens to us that he does not know about; nothing happens to us that he cannot make work for good even though someone meant it for evil.

You can know that peace that passes all understanding in your life right now. Those are not just words the priest says at the close of a service of Holy Communion. Those words convey a state of being that only Jesus can ever give.

And that kind of peace is within your grasp this very moment. Close your eyes and say this: "Jesus come. I love you." Then give yourself away to someone or something. You will be walking in newness of life.

— *The Rev. Robert K. Stull, Jr.,
Trinity, Vero Beach, Florida*

Evensong

To describe what Evensong is about presents difficult choices. The music sung is wide-ranging, but centers around the core Anglican literature developed over the past 400 years for Evensong. The structure of the service contains a number of themes—the very human interaction between God and his people as presented in the Psalms, running the gamut of emotions from brightest joy to blackest despair; the radical and world-changing effect of responding with integrity to an authentic encounter with God as described by Mary in the *Magnificat*; the implications of a God who always keeps promises, described by Simeon in the *Nunc dimittis*. However, three words seem to me to be useful points of departure: light, conversation, and time.

Light

Light, by presence, absence, and invocation, is central to Evensong. The service starts as light is fading and the day is drawing to a close.

By ancient tradition, the office hymn for the service invokes the presence of light, in

the text of the ancient hymn *Phos hilaron* ("O gracious light, pure brightness of the ever-living Father in heaven") or in other hymns of light. The service calls to mind a time when darkness was an inescapable part of daily routine, a time when evil could and did go about unhindered under cover of darkness, a time before electricity when the means of keeping back the darkness—candles, fires, oil lamps—were very expensive and beyond reach for many. In this context, the Evensong's celebration of light, both in its physical presence and as an icon of the "gracious Light," the light to lighten the Gentiles," takes on richer and deeper meaning.

We live in a day and age where true physical darkness is almost never experienced because of electricity. Yet spiritual darkness presses upon us from every direction. In an earlier time, the passing hours of the day called to mind and reinforced the spiritual truths of our existence, truths recalled by Evensong. We are the people that walked (and continue to walk) in darkness, the people who have been given the great

Light of Jesus Christ. The evil that once hid under cover of darkness now makes itself attractive in ways that would not be necessary or even seen in darkness. One might argue that our modern flavors of evil are thus more subtle and more threatening, since we can switch off our natural fear and unease with darkness by turning on lights, lowering our instinctive defenses. At Evensong, in a darkened church, attentive listening and prayer can return us to a necessary awareness of the conflict between dark and light, can make us mindful of that which is of ultimate worth. Christ, the Light of the World, is the only ultimately reliable illumination for our lives.

Conversation

Other writers have described attendance at Choral Evensong as dropping in on a conversation, a conversation that has been in progress for hundreds of years and will continue for hundreds of years. One may choose to join parts of the conversation, or one may simply listen. This is, to my mind, an apt description.

As the monastic tradition grew and spread in Christianity, a central feature of that tradition was the *Opus Dei*, the work of God that involved prayer, recitation of Scripture, and chanting of psalms alongside disciplined and attentive silence in a series of daily offices beginning before dawn and ending long after sunset. The number and wide-ranging location of monastic communities ensured that this conversation between God and his people would be continuous and unceasing.

Evensong is part of this conversation. It is an offering to God from a community (in this instance, the Evensong choir) that continues without regard to whether it is being heard by a congregation of ten or one hundred, as the music and prayer are directed towards an audience of one. It is an offering and conversation which all may join as they choose, but which places no pressure upon any worshiper for specific immediate activity in the service.

As choral worship, Evensong offers worshipers the opportunity to participate through attentive listening, a time to let thoughts and prayers float

freely, rising on the incense of sacred scripture and music. In the quiet of Evensong, one may undertake the hard work of contemplative prayer, may experience the pain of sin recognized, or seek the relief of penitence. Worshipers may thus engage in this eternal conversation at a level of individual choice, finding in the dimmer light and quieter context of the service, a space in which spiritual truths and individual failings may be perceived and confronted without crowds, noise, or distraction.

Time

Most of us are near slaves to our calendars and day planners. Contemplation and worship of God outside of linear time is enormously difficult for those of us who are virtually straitjacketed by block after block of scheduled time. Sunday evenings seem to be a time when even the busiest of us may pause, take a breath, and collect our thoughts for the coming week. Traffic in the city relaxes a bit; the noises of the day fade somewhat. The evening light presents the church in a gentler, subtly more mystical

way. The windows glow with a special light.

In this brief interlude of respite, Evensong offers an opportunity to forget linear time, to step outside it briefly, by joining in worship that is part of a stream of prayer that started nearly two thousand years ago and, by God's grace, will continue until the end of time. Evensong calls us to remember older times and to look to the future, while living the Gospel in the present. The constant structure of the service reminds us of the consistency of God's love for his people, even as the texts and psalms of the service teach us that acceptance of that love will change our world and turn it upside down.

Time to pray, time to listen, time to think, time to fear, time to repent, time to forget time—these are some of the gifts offered by Evensong. As the pace of life in our world accelerates, here is a place where one can step off the treadmill and rest for a while, to regain energy for the work that awaits us.

— Jeff McConnaughey,
Assistant Organist and
Choirmaster for Evensong,
All Saints', Atlanta, Georgia

Go To The People And Use Your Gifts

Not long ago I was involved in the making of the video, *Restoring Hope In Our Church*, which was distributed to all Church of England parishes. This came just before our Diocesan Synod where we were recalling the priorities we had set ourselves. All of this reminded me of the rapidly changing and highly mobile times in which we live (even though I am writing this in the middle of a traffic jam!). Not only do people with many beliefs, backgrounds, and values live cheek-by-jowl, they also 'network' in ways that may be described in terms of professional, leisure, or 'issue-oriented' interests. The Church has to respond, of course, to such a plurality: no one answer will be right for all – even in a small community. This has implications for patterns of worship and ministry in our parishes.

The Christian heritage of the nation can, of course, awaken faith in some but certain

aspects of it are becoming a burden from which the Church has to free itself if it is to be effective. An example of this is the responsibility for the maintenance of buildings which are places of worship but are also a valuable part of the nation's built heritage and focus for the community. Congregations cannot be expected to bear all the burden of keeping these buildings in good repair without assistance from the state and community. People are to be found today in large numbers, seeking meaning in their lives in the oddest places: boot fairs, supermarkets, and a variety of 'special interest' gatherings. We need to be prepared to go to where they are, while, at the same time, making sure they are made welcome in our traditional places of gathering. It is important for us to invest in situations where there is significant response so that human, financial, and other resources can be developed for outreach and service in particular areas of need.

It is obvious that congregations cannot do everything

on their own. In training, mission, youth and children's work, and in pastoral care, for example, we need help from others. Partnerships are a key to effectiveness today, whether they are with the diocese and the national bodies or with voluntary agencies. Where are your partnerships in the Gospel? The bishop gathered with clergy and people is, of course, an ancient pattern of being church but it is also a way of being partners in mission. Each of us has been gifted and called by God to exercise our gifts for the benefit of all. People's gifts have to be discerned and they need to be enabled to fulfill the vocation to which they have been called by God. Only in this way will we reflect the vision for the Church set out in the first letter of St. John: we share with one another because we share a common life in the Father and the Son — through the gracious work of the Holy Spirit.

— *The Rt. Rev. Michael
Nazir-Ali,
Bishop of Rochester, U.K.*

A Serious Charge

In a review of *Love's Redeeming Work* by Rowan Williams, Arnold Hunt writes:

The defining mood of Anglicanism is a conservative skepticism, self-critical rather than iconoclastic, striking a 'note of sobriety and penitence, of realism interwoven with reticence and indirectness born of gratitude or wonder,' and finding its most characteristic expression in a language of 'concentrated but unhurried delight.' This is some way away from the classical Anglican triad of Scripture, reason, and tradition, let alone the Thirty-Nine Articles; and it signals a shift away from a purely doctrinal or dogmatic definition of Anglicanism to something more subjective and elusive: an Anglican attitude rather than an Anglican orthodoxy.

I found this review in *First Things*, a conservative Roman Catholic journal edited by The Rev. Richard Neuhaus. Father Neuhaus comments that:

It may well be argued that no

other communion has provided a spiritual ambiance of such gentility, combining aesthetic appeal and intellectual nuance. The "Anglican attitude" is undoubtedly a winsome way of being Christian. It is also ethnocentric, vestigial, and averse to the truth, claims, disciplines, and passions that make for mission.

Like all good criticism, this serious charge hurts because it may be true. Soren Kierkegaard raised the alarm 150 years ago about relying on the "aesthetic" too much. He warned that the aesthetic overemphasizes the corporeal, the temporal, the finite and the necessary – and leads us away from the eternal, infinite, spiritual way.

I admit that I enjoy being an Anglican because of its aesthetic appeal and intellectual nuance. We approach belief with an almost Talmudic playfulness, preferring dialectical ambiguity to dogmatic rigidity. But I am stung by Fr. Neuhaus's critique. Is the "Anglican attitude" now an expensive luxury in a world awash in human need and

urgent with tribal violence and postmodern anxiety? Is the liberalism of Anglicanism too weak for our own good?

I wish I could dismiss this questioning of our seriousness as jealousy or sour grapes. But it's not so easy. Are we really ethnocentric? How far does the "anglo" in our name limit our vision? To be vestigial is to be merely a reminder of former purpose and life, something like the appendix, useless except to cause problems.

Most cutting of all is the accusation that we are averse to the truth and that we have no passion for mission. Ouch! I dare you to think hard about these criticisms.

The rejection of criticism is the beginning of decline. Listen, therefore, to this sympathetic critique and be renewed in grace.

– *The Very Rev. Allen W.
Farabee, Dean,
St. Paul's Cathedral,
Buffalo, New York*

For Whom Are You Living?

Are you a person who likes to "keep a schedule?" Does the calendar or your palm pilot guide you through your day? If you think about it, life is full of interruptions! Traffic can be an interruption to your schedule. A phone call (or, if you're with someone who has a cell phone and it is on, their phone call!) can be an interruption. Running into someone when you are shopping can be an interruption.

When I am living with a tight schedule or a full calendar, I try to mentally and emotionally adjust to interruptions; and sometimes I am successful, and sometimes I get frustrated.

I recently had a day off. I felt very relaxed, almost leisurely about my time as I made a list of projects, what I needed, and off to Home Depot (hoping that I didn't run into traffic!). As I looked at my gas gauge, I decided to get gas on the way, since it was such a long trip. At the

gas station, I ran into someone I had been meaning to call and we had a nice little visit. To my surprise, I was relaxed, pleased I had run into her (and yet, an interruption to my anticipated schedule!). Then, as I walked out after paying for my gas, I heard the sound of a dying battery from a pest control truck. I told the driver to wait there while I got my car because I had jumper cables in the trunk. He looked at me with a dazed stare, and thanked me even before we had successfully jumped his truck.

When I arrived at Home Depot, I ran into yet another person who I told that we needed to set up an appointment. We visited for a little while. Another interruption?

As I drove home from Home Depot to work on my projects I realized I was thankful to the Lord for every interruption and surprise that he had placed in my path that morning! I realized even more, to my surprise, when I go about my day with an attitude of "this is the Day the Lord has

made, let us rejoice and give thanks in it", when my schedule is not filled, when I am not stressed by the tasks I must do, the people I must see, the scheduled events I must conquer, that I am actually thankful for what I experienced.

What if each of us saw every day that way? Yes, we have tasks to do and people to see. Yes, we have schedules that are important. But, Jesus had interruptions along the way, and always seemed to have grace when he handled them! I sometimes wonder if interruptions, as much as they might not be in the schedule for our day, may be in God's schedule — His "divine appointments" in our lives.

We have become so stressed, so committed to a full schedule in the name of being important, being successful, and even having fun, that we treat people badly along the way and ruin opportunities to be used by God, blessed by God, to reach out in his name, and share the Gospel by word and deed.

I am one who likes a sched-

ule. I believe that part of discipleship involves discipline. But, God might have something else for me on top of the schedule I have constructed, that I try to control. He may have something more for me to do and, if I have given him the day, and he is in control, then I need to welcome, with grace, whoever or whatever he brings my way. Do I always succeed? Not yet; but this week, I got a little better!

Who sets your agenda? And, to what end or purpose? Do you seek to live life God's way? With God's timing? With the Holy Spirit in control? At whatever time you may be reading this, now might be a good time to evaluate or re-evaluate who or what you live life for. Is your schedule and attitude-"God-honoring", "people honoring", filled with grace, and enjoyed? It can be. It depends on whom you are living for, and who is in charge of your schedule!

- The Rev. Greg Kronz,
St. Luke's, Hilton Head Island,
South Carolina

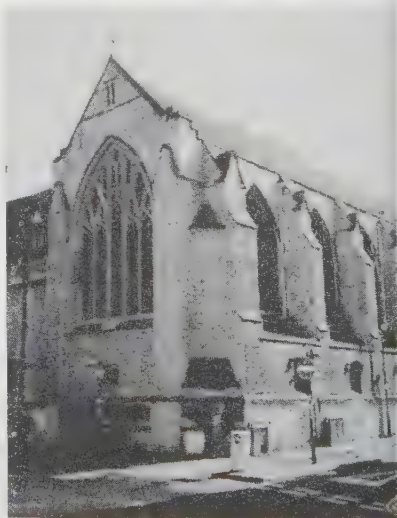
Pusey House

It has been more than ten years since I was last in Oxford and 24 years since I did any work at the library of Pusey House. One of the amazing things about a place like Oxford is that on many levels it always seems to be unaffected by time and always the same. Yet closer inspection always reveals the existence of change even in places where change almost seems antithetical to its make-up.

On many important levels the business of scholarship and investigation have not changed for centuries. It still involves reading massive amounts in a particular area in order to get a handle on the vision and thinking that has been inspired by a particular discipline of study. It often involves the tedious labor of working your way through stacks and stacks of works related to your subject matter, some of which are relevant and many of which only touch on the subject you are pursuing. What changes is the

manner and the ways in which the subject matter is pursued. The science and technology of cataloguing material has changed over the centuries. The philosophical and epistemological trends that shape one's pursuit of inquiring change focus from one generation to another.

One of the wonderful things about Oxford is that it is a place where you can experience change and stasis at the same time. For example, when looking up works in the library within minutes you can go from using a computer



operated catalogue system to leather bound volumes where entries are made in manuscript that is both beautiful and ancient.

For me, Oxford is a wondrous and magical place. On any given day I could go from pursuing a dusty tract that has not seen the light of day in decades to a robust conversation at the College dining table which had the potential of redirecting my whole line of inquiry. A dynamic which I have found after twenty-two years of ordained ministry is not unlike the pilgrimage our Lord invites us to take on a daily basis and is in line with the passage from Matthew's Gospel (13:52), "This means, then, that every true teacher must become a learner in the kingdom of Heaven, they are like a home owner who takes new and old things out of their store room."

So, what is this place I went to in Oxford to find things new and old? What is Pusey House for? It was founded in 1884, shortly after the death of Dr. Edward Bouvierie Pusey,

Regius Professor of Hebrew, Canon of Christ Church. He was, along with Keble and Newman, one of the leaders of the Oxford Movement that inspired the establishment of St. Paul's in 1852. It was the work of Dr. Pusey and others which recalled the Church of England and the Anglican Communion to its Catholic roots. They revived a vision of prayer and Sacramental life that emphasized our connections with the greater Church. They taught our forebear's in the faith as well that we are part of the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church of Christ.

Pusey House was founded by his friends in Dr. Pusey's memory to house his extraordinary library and to continue his work of pastoral care and scholarship. Over the years the libraries' collections have expanded and the particulars of the work has evolved but the original vision continues to be the basis for the work of the House and her Chapter of three priests. The offices and the Mass are celebrated daily in the "beauty of Holiness",

which the Chapel of the Resurrection encourages and enables. Students from the University are prepared for Baptism and confirmation, confessions are heard regularly, and the Chapter has an important ministry of Spiritual Direction.

It is not only a scholarly resource for the maintenance of the Catholic faith but it is a place where it is taught, preached, and lived. The Library continues to be a place of study and learning, while the Archive constitutes a unique resource for research into the origins of the Catholic revival in our church. Ultimately Pusey House gives witness to that unique vision of scholarship which is part of our Anglican inheritance, a place where research, learning, and inquiry take place in the context of hospitality, prayer, and the pursuit of holiness of life.

*The Rev. William Willoughby,
III, SPIRITUS GLADIUS,
St. Paul the Apostle,
Savannah, Georgia*

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An anonymous gift in memory of the late Rev. George A. Detor, a native of New York who served the Church in his home state as well as in Texas, California, and Louisiana, will be used to send books, tapes, vestments, and other usefuls to Third World dioceses and parishes. The gift is the largest ever received by Operation Pass Along in its thirty years of serving the Church.

THAT little announcement appeared in the Advent 2002 issue of *THE ANGLICAN DIGEST*. Since then Operation Pass Along has continued to send books, tapes, vestments, altar linens and fittings, choir robes, and clericals at an accelerating pace to Third World countries at no cost whatsoever to the recipients.

On the 21st of April of this year, Pass Along sent its 10,000th book to a Third World country. The book,

Archbishop Rowan Williams' *The Dwelling of the Light*, went to an Anglican priest in Africa.

More than two hundred bishops, priests, deacons, seminarians, and lay leaders in fourteen Third World countries are currently receiving items from Pass Along. By far, the greatest number is in Africa, but Pass Along extends into India, the Philippines, the South Pacific, and even into Serbia and Montenegro.

In the two years since receipt of its major donation, Pass Along has sent more than two hundred audio tapes; 3600 books, 786 vestment and clerical items, ranging from girdles and amices to cassocks, chasubles, and copes; and a dozen or so videocassettes.

While these statistics are impressive, the real significance of Pass Along is revealed in the letters received:

"Thank you a lot for all the books you have been sending. These are very important books ... as I intend to go to

University of Malawi for [a] B.A. in Theology."

"It was very kind of you to send audio tapes as well. I find them very useful and a quick way of sharing the message. I assure you that I [will] see that they go round the diocese so that many parishes will hear the message."

"The altar linens will accompany me as I go round the outstations."

"You have made pastoral care and counseling very qualitative. The two books for Old Testament by Robinson and H. H. Rowley will (for these are the only personal books I have in Old Testament) help me a lot."

~ ~ ~

You can help Operation Pass Along continue to serve the Church by sending books, tapes, vestments, and clericals to be passed along where needed, whether it be at home or abroad. You can also help by sending a few dollars from time to time to be used in sending these items to our Anglican brethren overseas.

- *The Trustees' Warden*

Bible Relevancy

It seems to me that you can prove absolutely anything from the Bible, so someone quoting the Bible in support of their position (whatever it might be) does not persuade me in the least. Everybody believes the Bible supports their positions and quotes the Bible in theological disputations. But does that mean that every use of the Bible is as valid as every other, that biblical interpretation is entirely subjective and that "you can prove anything from the Bible?" I don't think so.

You can make the Bible say whatever you want, but only if you take verses out of context and ignore everything in the Bible that doesn't support your views. The classic example is Psalm 14:1 — "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'" If you ignore the first half of the sentence, you can say the Bible teaches atheism. But if you look at the whole verse and the whole Bible, you cannot conclude that.

I contend that there are some basic, unambiguous convictions shared by the biblical writers:

God exists and made the entire universe;

God revealed Himself to Abraham and promised Palestine to his descendants;

Under the leadership of Moses, God brought the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt;

At Mt. Sinai, they entered into a covenant with God;

God chose Jesus to be the agent of salvation for humanity;

Righteous though he was, Jesus was arrested and executed "a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the whole world;"

God raised Jesus from the dead to a new glorified existence, and;

Jesus will return at the end of time, when all wrongs will be righted and all good deeds rewarded.

There are hundreds of lesser matters over which Christians disagree, even if they agree with the above statements. Each group quotes the Bible in support of their beliefs. Are all appeals to Scripture equally valid? Or can we distinguish between more and less valid interpretations of the Bible? There are ways of evaluating theological positions and how

Scripture is used to support them, though it is not easy or simple. There isn't space to fully explore that subject other than to suggest that one major issue in biblical interpretation is relevance.

In the legal arena, not every appeal to a legal precedent is accepted by a judge. If the judge thinks the present case and the supposed precedent are not analogous, the judge will reject the argument. Relevancy is an important issue, though by no means the only one, in biblical interpretation. Biblical interpretation is not entirely subjective. There are some matters about which the biblical tradition is unambiguous, and the Bible cannot be made to teach absolutely anything.

– *The Rev. William G. Gartig,
Cincinnati, Ohio*

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Advertisement



A PRAYER FOR

Minnesota

*O God by whose timeless care earth is
furnished, we praise Thee for livelihood and leisure
so amply framed in welcome Minnesota.*

*For sheer delight hast Thou spangled her land
with ten thousand mirrors of glory;*

*For the need of life dost Thou bring forth sturdy
grain for the millers' grist,
to bind Thy love to our bread;*

*And if after Thee we would builders be, then
thanks for the mountains of iron that we may
exchange for sinews of steel.*

*Where Thou hast gone before, O blessed
Father, let us follow after: to the headwaters of
Thy mercy and the harbor of Thy might;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Amen.

Theses from our Cathedral Door . . .

*If it was ok then,
Why is it verboten now?*



Numerous Episcopal churches of high pedigree today got started as platforms for independent innovative rectors. There were fewer cookie-cutters in the 1800s.

St. Paul's, Philadelphia began as a separation from Christ Church in that city in order to support a controversial Evangelical curate from Christ Church. One of the two great parishes of Vicksburg, Mississippi was started so a former rector of the original church could have his own pulpit when he returned from the Civil War. Christ Church, Springfield, Illinois began as an alternative to prevailing high-churchmanship in the diocese. The Ascension, Fifth Avenue, New York was built to house a single popular preacher.

It was the same — in fact, more so — with the early Anglo-Catholic parishes. These were protest-churches against prevailing low-churchmanship in dioceses like Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and

even New York. Churches like St. Mary the Virgin, Manhattan, and The Advent, Boston, took elaborate legal precautions in order not to be under diocesan control in respect to their liturgy, needless to say, but also in respect to their property.

In all these cases, there was rarely a question of not being recognized by the bishop or being regarded as "schismatic." Bishop Eastburn in Boston did not like the practices down on Brimmer Street, but he never said the parish had no right to exist.

If bishops back then had behaved like our ECUSA bishops are behaving today, there would be no historic Anglo-Catholic parishes within ECUSA and the very few remaining "low churches" (*existent-ils?*) would be Presbyterian.

— *The Very Rev. Dr. Theol.
Paul F. M. Zahl, Dean,
Cathedral Church of the Advent,*

Christmas-at-Sea

The Seamen's Church Institute reports that SCI chaplains and volunteer visitors to vessels delivered gifts to 15,479 mariners during the 2003 Christmas season. The knitted gifts included scarves, hats, socks, and vests. The number of Christmas-at-Sea knitters rose to 3,500 last year but SCI reports that another 1,000 "helpful hands" would be welcomed. For information or to obtain patterns, contact Ms. Barbara Clauson, director of Christmas-at-Sea, at 212-349-9090 or send an e-mail to:

cas@seamenschurch.org.

Patterns can be downloaded on the internet from www.seamenschurch.org.

In other news from the SCI, The Rev. Andy Moore, an Anglican priest from the Diocese of Trinidad and Tobago has been named Director of the SCI's International Seafarers' Center in Port Newark, New Jersey. The Rev. Dr. Jean R. Smith is the Executive Director of the Seamen's Church Institute.

A Prayer for Mariners

Lord God, Creator of land and sea, watch over those who work at sea or on the coastal or inland waterways. Be with them in fair weather and foul, in danger or distress. Strengthen them when they are weary; lift them up when they are down; and comfort them when they are far away from those they love. In this life, bring them safely to shore, and, in the life to come, welcome them to their eternal home; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer for the Families of Mariners

God, we pray for the parents, spouses, children, and loved ones of all mariners: We ask you to bless, strengthen, and protect them. May they look forward with confidence to the days their families will be together; and when they are apart, may all that they do increase their longing and love for you and for one another; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

— *Seamen's Church Institute
of New York & New Jersey*

Unconditional Love

In the book, *Unconditional Love*, Father John Powell tells of a young man, Tommy, a student in his class, The Theology of Faith. Tommy turns out to be the "atheist in residence" in the course. He constantly objected to, smirked at, or whined about the possibility of an unconditionally loving Father-God.

At the end of the course, he asked in a slightly cynical tone, "Do you think I'll ever find God?" Powell decided on a little shock therapy. "No!" he said. "Oh," Tommy responded, "I thought that was the product you were pushing." I let him get five steps from the door and then called out, "Tommy! I don't think you'll ever find him but I'm absolutely certain he will find you!" He shrugged a little and left my class and my life.

Later, I heard a report that Tom had graduated and I was duly grateful. Then a sad report, Tommy had a terminal illness. Before I could search him out, he came to see me.

Tommy, I've thought about

you so often. I hear you are sick.

Yes, very sick.

Can you talk about it?

Sure. What would you like to know?

What's it like to be only 24 and dying?

Well, it could be worse.

Like what?

Well, like being 50 and having no values or ideals, like being 50 and thinking that booze and making money are the real 'biggies' in life.

But what I really came to see you about, Tom said, is something you said to me on the last day of class. I asked you if you thought I would ever find God and you said, 'No!' That surprised me. Then you said, 'But he will find you.' I thought about that a lot, even though my search for God was not at all intense at that time.

One day I woke up, and decided to spend what time I had doing something more profitable. I thought about you and your class, and remembered something else you said: 'The essential sadness is to go through life without living.' But it would be

almost equally sad to go through life and leave this world without ever telling those you loved that you had loved them.' So I began with the hardest one, my dad.

He was reading the newspaper when I approached him. 'Dad?' 'Yes, what?' he asked without lowering the newspaper. 'Dad, I would like to talk with you.' 'Well, talk.' 'I mean, it's really important.' The newspaper came down three slow inches. 'What is it?' 'Dad, I love you. I just wanted you to know that.' The newspaper fluttered to the floor. Then my father did two things I could not remember him ever doing before. He cried, and he hugged me. It felt so good to be close to my father, to see his tears, to feel his hug, to hear him say that he loved me.

It was easier with my mother and little brother. We shared things we had been keeping secret for many years.

Then one day I turned around, and God was there. Apparently, God does things in his own way and at his own hour. But the important thing is that he was there. He found

me. You were right. He found me even after I stopped looking for him.

Tommy, you are saying something very important and much more universal than you realize. You are saying that the surest way to find God is not to make him a private possession, a problem-solver, but rather by opening yourself to his love.

— from *UNCONDITIONAL LOVE*, John Powell, used by permission, Copyright, Resources for Christian Living, Allen Texas

Where is our Church's Soul?

In our paper the *Doonesbury* cartoon is on the Op-Ed page. Most of us think of it as a political cartoon that skewers politicians in enjoyable, if sometimes painful, ways.

But Gary Trudeau, the person behind the cartoon, has an eye for the ridiculous in other areas as well. The church, and religion in general, do not escape his razor-sharp attention. I particularly like it when he does a ser-

ies on religion because he may zero in on some fad that has gripped the church. The fact that the emperor sometimes has no clothes becomes painfully evident.

He once depicted what he called the Little Church of Walden. The church sits in a quaint setting with a tranquil lake in the background. The priest is named Scot (but with only one "t" on his name, a little Doonesbury touch). In one of the strips he is making announcements to his congregation on a Sunday morning. "Okay, flock. I thought I'd run through this week's activities." With clipboard in hand, he continues, "This Monday, we have a lecture on nutrition from Kate Moss' personal chef. Tuesday and Thursday will be our regular 12-Step nights."

A parishioner queries, "Scot, would that be drugs or sex addiction?"

Holding his clipboard and pen, so we don't doubt his ability as an administrator, he explains, "Drugs. Sex addiction we've cut down to nine steps. That's on Friday at 6:30 p.m. — right after organic gardening."

In another setting, he continues,

"Also, a special treat — Saturday night will be aerobic male-bonding night! So bring your sneakers! Any questions?"

A voice comes from the side of the room, "Is there a church service this week?" Without a pause, Scot says, "Canceled. There was a conflict with the self-esteem workshop."

Isn't that beautiful? Trudeau moved right to the heart of it and exposed a church that tries so hard to be too trendy. Isn't he asking, "Does the church have a sense of purpose? Does the church know why it exists any longer? Is it too busy trying to please everyone?"

The challenge in that cartoon is for the church to be what it is meant to be — to get its priorities straight. There really isn't anything wrong with any of those things the Little Church of Walden was doing but how central is any of it to the main task of the church?

When the worship of God, for which the church surely exists if for nothing else, is canceled because other things are more important, then one knows that that church has lost its soul.

— *The Rev. Richard Humke,
Calvary, Louisville, Kentucky*

*Tracts for our Times**Presence and
Love*

The Gospel according to St. Matthew begins with the promise and declaration, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel, which means, God with us." The Gospel of St. John says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ..." God comes to us, He enters into his creation to redeem and save through his passion and death. Jesus Christ is indeed "God with us", divine presence within creation.

The Gospel according to Matthew ends with the promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages." From now and all eternity, God is forever Immanuel, God with us, inviting us into his obedience, to enter into his mystery, "that he may dwell in us and we in him." God's love is such that he goes to any length to love us, his creation, his people, his world. "The earth is the Lord's and all that therein

is ..." Heaven and earth are filled with his glory. And he uses the things of his creation as channels and vehicles of grace. We call them sacraments.

The Christian year begins with the promise of presence, with its focus on the incarnation of the Son of God through the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we live and celebrate the liturgical year, we participate in his presence and behold his glory. The centerpiece of the year is the Paschal celebration, the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus. He was born to die, so we are saved and made free by his cross and precious blood. He became as we are in humanity, that we may become as he is, God's own possession by adoption and grace. He did not leave us bereft, comfortless. He sent the Holy Spirit, his presence and power, that his new creation in the world, the Church, would forever declare the divine presence and love in the world. After celebrating the tremendous mystery of God — the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Christian year ends in

celebration of the eucharistic presence, the Body and Blood of Christ, graciously given, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.

The feast of Corpus Christi culminates the liturgical year, even as it inaugurates the ongoing life of the Church, his baptismal and eucharistic community. The Eucharist is the sure and certain encounter of the people of God with the living and true God. Jesus assures us not only of the life giving presence and power of the Holy Spirit, but by and through the Spirit, his presence, his accessibility, his with-ness. Because he is risen and ascended, he can be met, known, loved, obeyed, and adored. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ that people may come into a saving knowledge of God, and through baptism be born anew and given the status of sons and daughters, as well as members of his Body, the Church. Jesus promised to be with us. The Eucharist is the worship of God. In the liturgy Christ is present in his word, and in the eucharist, that

Word becomes flesh indeed. He does not send a messenger or mere symbols, he comes himself. "This is my Body..." "This is my blood ..." Because he is truly present, he can be worshiped and adored.

He is known to us in the breaking of the bread. How? We know not. But we do know we can trust the trustworthiness of God. He is present when two or three are gathered together in his Name. So when believers gather for prayer and praise, for Scripture and meditation, for intercession and contemplation, he is present. He is present in Baptism, that we may share in his death and resurrection, be washed and forgiven of all sins, and be born anew to life eternal. He is present in the sacrament of Marriage, in the mystery of man and woman becoming one in him. He is present in the sacraments of healing, Penance and Unction, absolving and healing. He is present in the sacrament of Holy Orders, that Apostolic Succession may continue the Church in good order, assuring the pastoral care of the

people of God, and the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church.

The Holy Eucharist was instituted at the Last Supper observed on Maundy Thursday. That brief celebration is overwhelmed by the passion, suffering, and death of Christ. The Church in her wisdom thus suggested the Thursday after Trinity Sunday as the splendid occasion to give praise and thanks for the tremendous gift of Holy Communion. This provides ample time to explore the depths of the meaning of the eucharistic sacrifice and presence. We are told to celebrate the mystery of the Body and Blood of the Lord until he come. We respond in obedience to his command to "do this, in remembrance of me." Even as Christians spend time reading, marking, learning, and digesting the Scriptures, so it is right to spend time in his eucharistic presence. "Lo, I am with you ..." On the night before the Passion, he bid the disciples, "watch with me one hour." Spending time before the Blessed Sacrament is an

expression of that watching, He with us, we with him.

Corpus Christi is the festival of the divine presence within the creatures of bread and wine, truly his Body and his Blood. That is why we handle such Holy Things with great care. Even after the Reformation, the Prayer Book directed with such care and reverence the remaining Sacrament should be disposed of. The Church has always encouraged her people to approach the celebration with genuine preparation, and leave it with due thanksgiving and resolve. Hence the tradition of confession and fasting before Holy Communion, and prescribed prayers of thanksgiving afterward.

God is always going out of his way towards us, towards his creation, towards his world, for his love is unconditional and lavish. He is Emmanuel, God with us. He is with us truly, unto the end of the ages. His love is expressed in compassion, judgment, and mercy. It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God - maybe that

is why we are shy and reluctant about his presence. What does he demand of us? Love. He said, "Thou shalt love ..." The risen Christ confronted Peter with these words thrice, "Peter, do you love me?" These words are directed to us, "do you love me?" Jesus said, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. The response to God is obedience, for we are called to love God with our whole being, and others as self. Thus to meet him in Word and Sacrament is a call to love him. We love God by worship, service, and mission. What else is there when one falls into hands of Almighty God, but to love and obey? Eucharistic worship expresses our profound love for God. Mission and service are love in action, love demonstrated. He is with us still. Lord's day by Lord's day, we are privileged to encounter him in his eucharistic presence, and for that gift, we do give thanks indeed!



– The Rev. Dr.
Richard Cornish
Martin, SSC



HILLSPEAKING

BARN CATS! To most, this evokes the image of a lean, hungry-looking, old black tomcat charged with keeping the rodent population under control in exchange for a warm place to sleep and a few squirts of freshly drawn milk early in the morning.

The Hillspeak cats, Gray, Minie, Ptolemy, and Mo, don't fit that mold. Three of them are barn cats, right enough, but are far from lean and hungry-looking (rotund and well-fed might better describe them). They expect milk in a saucer freshly poured from the carton. As far as Gray is concerned if it isn't half-and-half, forget it.

The Barn Trio earn their name simply by being there. They come to the Barn in the morning, leave in the evening. Between coming and leaving, they mostly eat,

sleep, and present a pretty picture for visitors. Gray has a penchant for cardboard boxes, any cardboard box. As soon as UPS, FedEx, or the postman delivers a box she climbs on, or in if it is open, and goes to sleep. If there is no box handy, a file tray will do nicely, thank you.

Ptolemy and Minie are window-sill perchers. Ptolemy favors the picture window in the General Manager's office overlooking the Lower Meadow with its mice and other goodies, while Minie prefers the window in the library office on the third level of the Barn overlooking the driveway so he can see if anybody is bringing in something to eat. They can also be found in a chair in the Board Room, on the vesting table, behind a door, in a wastepaper basket, or smack dab in the middle of the floor so that everybody has to walk around them.

Gray is the matriarch and as such enjoys and insists on pride of place. If the other two occasionally forget and usurp, she is quite ready to box their ears to correct the matter

though either tom outweighs her two to one.

All three occasionally go to chapel but I have not noticed that such attendance particularly improves their behavior.

Ptolemy has developed a taste for distilled water (although as far as other distilled liquids are concerned he is a tee-totaler) and enjoys drinking out of the little self-contained fountain on my desk.

Mo is the odd man out, or odd cat out. When she was young (she is one of Gray's offspring) she ventured into the Barn and Gray chased her up beyond the hayloft to the rafters. She has not been back. She sleeps on my bed and spends much of her time in the Wash House which appears to be her domain. However, unlike Gray in the Barn, she does permit an occasional feline visitor.

Whether Barn Cats or Wash House Cats or, as one of our neighbors affectionately calls them, "lazy bums," they are a joy to have around. Come see for yourself.

— *The Trustees' Warden*

Purpose?

"Purpose" is the buzz recently. There are a number of books out there with the word "purpose" in them: like, *The Purpose Driven Life* and *The Purpose Driven Church*. The notion is that the things that we do ought to have some intentionality behind them; to be headed in a direction; in short, to serve a purpose. People are often working against their own values and goals because they are not focused enough.

So why do we gather? What is the agenda of our coming together? What is the purpose of our returning each week for the liturgy? It's arguable that the purpose may be obscure to some people, or that others may be mistaken about it, or that the purpose may even be clear but unconvincing. For moral instruction? Well, yes, that certainly goes on when we gather. To say our prayers for ourselves and others? Without a doubt, we certainly pray. To receive communion? That seems to

be a regular item, at least in the Episcopal Church.

Yet the purpose of our gathering, the agenda of our liturgy, if you will, week by week, is something else. Have you ever been to a meeting, and wondered what the purpose is? Perhaps at the end of the meeting you were still wondering. Still, we hope that the title of the agenda would provide some orientation. The key is the title at the head of our gathering, "Holy Eucharist": a word that means "thanksgiving." We are there, that is, to give thanks. That is the purpose of meeting; without thanksgiving we are purposeless and working against our own agenda. And of course the agenda is not ours, but God's; our gathering has been called by the One who has also supplied the purpose.

The priest issues the invitation, "Let us give thanks to the Lord our God", which begins the "Great Thanksgiving" prayer. This is the agenda-setting item. So, for what are we thankful? In this prayer, we sketch out the territory of what

we are thankful for: "the goodness and love which you have made know to us in creation"; "the calling of Israel to be your People"; "your Word spoken through the prophets,"; "above all, the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son." At the heart of the thanksgiving are our thanks for Jesus' death and resurrection, which means new life for us.

The purpose of our meeting is to give thanks and to remember God's generosity. God's generosity is the source of our existence itself. God was under no obligation to make the world. God's generosity is the source of our redemption; in fact, a costly generosity, highlighted by the wounds of the cross. Remembering makes these great gifts present to us once again.

But we might bring these a bit closer to home, if we are going to be truly "purpose driven." We might be thankful for the gifts we have: our homes, our families, and our health. We might be thankful for preservation in times when these things are chal-

lenged by events, by the chaos that can overtake us. We might be thankful for God's mercy in forgiveness, in cases where our own actions have damaged ourselves and others. What are you thankful for? Our thanks ought to track God's generosity pretty closely. There is really no limit to God's generosity, or to our need for thankfulness.

Giving thanks for these things is also part of our agenda. On our way to the altar for communion we are invited to detail what we in particular are thankful for. Our thanksgiving is a part of what we do in this Eucharist, as we give thanks for God's mercies in our lives.

Here is where stewardship becomes thanksgiving. God has been generous in our lives, in bringing us to this point. Giving generously in turn of what we ourselves have been given is a powerful way in which we can express our thanks for God's gifts. It's a way in which we can enter into God's own generosity. Being generous, and giving, is a way in which we can feel closely the generosity of God

toward us. Remembering, and giving, is the way we make the reality of these great gifts present.

I have told you before that the Bauerschmidt family has been tithing for a number of years. Yet for me, going beyond the tithe was a challenge. Yet giving in this way has unlocked the truth of the real generosity of God, and the way in which I can join in it. I have much to be thankful for (not least of all Christ Church), and this seems a fitting way to express it.

Our purpose is clear. We gather to give thanks, and God has given us opportunity to do so.

– *The Rev. John Bauerschmidt,
Christ Church,
Covington, Louisiana*



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Cranmer's Corner . . .

The Work of the Holy Spirit

There are two kinds of people in the world — those who are called and those who are driven. The called know they belong to God. The driven want to prove their independence. The called find their soul's rest in God's love for them. The driven seek a love for their soul in all the wrong places. The called seek to discover what good gifts and works God's purpose for their life has set aside for them before the foundation of the world. The driven seek to find some kind of purpose*for themselves through their constant striving for achievement. The called enjoy what God has given them, even when others seem to have so much more. The driven are never satisfied, even when they have so much more than others.

What is the root difference between those who are called and those who are driven? According to Thomas

Cranmer, the answer is quite simple — the Holy Spirit. Only the Holy Spirit can break through human self-confidence and open our eyes to our need for Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can teach our hearts that we are restless until we rest in his love for us. Only the Holy Spirit can enable us to trust the sure and gracious promises of God's Word. Only the Holy Spirit can give us the assurance that in Jesus we are at last home — home with our Heavenly Father, home securely as his children, home safely despite our failings, home forever despite the reality of death, home! In short, only the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and the Sacrament can bring us to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Yet, even then, the Holy Spirit's work is not yet finished. Only the Holy Spirit can give us the confidence that God has endowed each one of us with the specific gifts and experiences we need to fulfil the good works he has prepared in advance for us to do. And only with

such an inner conviction do we find the freedom to have as much joy in making a difference in this world as God does. Finally, of course, only the Holy Spirit can inspire in us sufficient love for God and each other that we can increasingly act like our Heavenly Father in those opportunities he has set aside for us. In short, only the Holy Spirit working through God's Word and the Sacrament can sustain us in a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Thus, according to Cranmer, our coming to Christ and our staying with Christ, are both the work of the Holy Spirit. For, as he expressed it, only through the Holy Spirit can we "dwell in Him and He in us."

— *The Rev. Dr. Ashley Null,
Humboldt University,
Berlin, and Visiting Fellow,
Faculty of Divinity,
Cambridge University*



Parable of the Two Seas

There are two seas in Palestine. One is fresh, and fish make their home in it. Splashes of green adorn its banks. Along its shores, children play. The River Jordan fills this sea with sparkling water from the hills so it laughs in the sunshine. People build their houses near to it, and birds their nests; and every kind of life is happier because it is there. The River Jordan flows on south into another sea. There is no splash of fish, no fluttering leaf, no songbirds, no children's laughter. Travelers choose another route, unless on urgent business. The air hangs heavy above its waters, and neither man nor beast nor fowl drink of it.

What makes this mighty difference in these neighboring seas? Not the River Jordan. It empties the same good water in both. Not the soil in which they lie; not the country about it. This is the difference: The Sea of Galilee receives but does not keep the Jordan. For every drop that

flows into it, another drop flows out. The giving and receiving go on in equal measure. The other sea is shrewder, hoarding its income jealously. Every drop it gets, it keeps. The Sea of Galilee gives and lives. This other sea gives nothing. It is named the Dead Sea.

In our liturgical life, Lent is a season of reflection and penitence. Similarly, Advent is a season of anticipation and preparation. Now, as we move toward the fall, we enter another kind of season which also calls us to reflect and prepare — stewardship season. Soon we will be asked to ponder and reflect on a variety of considerations. What do you believe about God's attitude of generosity to us — in terms of the gifts of skill and wit and wisdom that endow our being, the grace of forgiveness we find in Christ, the bounty of the love of God that surrounds and fills our lives in our families and friends?

As the parable suggests, just as there are two seas in Palestine, there are two kinds of people in the world — those

who give of themselves, their time, their skill and their material well-being — as generously as they receive, and they thrive for the experience. And those who guard all that they get yet fail to find life in the keeping. During the season of stewardship, I hope you will reflect on this parable of the two seas and prepare your commitment to Christ with minds and hearts that wish to give and live and thrive.

— *The Rev. Julia W. Christian,
St. James by-the-Sea,
La Jolla, California*

.....

Bloopers

Some church bulletin bloopers are legendary. Here are a few.

The sermon this morning: 'Jesus Walks On the Water.' The sermon tonight: 'Searching for Jesus.'

For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.

Don't let worry kill you. Let the church help.

The ladies of the church have cast off clothing of every kind. They may be seen in the basement on Friday afternoon.

Ladies, don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.

The Low Self-Esteem Support Group will meet Thursday at 7:00 p.m. Please use the back door.

Weight Watchers will meet at 7:00 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use large double door at the side entrance.

Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered.

Finally, this one, which I've seen before, is not only legendary but, I suspect, apocryphal:

The associate minister unveiled the church's new tithing campaign slogan last Sunday: I Upped My Pledge—Up Yours.

— *via FIRST THINGS*

About the Cover

The Transfiguration, painted around 1310 by Duccio di Buoninsegna, hangs in the National Gallery in London. Christ appears in a transfigured state to the apostles Peter, John, and James. On either side of Christ are Moses and Elijah. The panel was on the back side of a three part altarpiece called *Maestà*, delivered to be placed on the high altar at the Siena Cathedral in 1311.

It was taken apart in 1771. Most of it is in the Cathedral Museum in Siena but several panels are found in other collections around the world. The

altarpiece front showed the Virgin and Child enthroned with saints and apostles. On the reverse, the paintings show Christ's earthly ministry through his Passion and post-Resurrection appearances.



THE FRANCISCAN ORDER OF THE DIVINE COMPASSION, (an ecumenical Anglican Religious Order), is a traditional, orthodox Religious Order formed to promote the historic Catholic Faith as the Anglican Church received it, closely following the footsteps and spirit of St. Francis. Inquiries: Men and women called to be a Tertiary of the Third Order, write: Fr. John Mark, OSF, Vicar-General, The Church of the Ascension, 2525 Seagler Road, Houston, TX 77042.

LORD, WE PRAY THEE
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IN PEACE; AND MAY THY
BLESSING BE EVER UPON US.

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CREAM OF THE CROP



04-4

The First and the Last: The Claim of Jesus Christ and the Claims of Other Religious Traditions by George Sumner. The Rev. Dr. George Sumner is the principal of Wycliffe College, Toronto.

Dr. Sumner addresses the goals of Christians who wish to be faithful to the lordship of Jesus Christ while being open to possible truths found in other religions. He develops an historical perspective of Christian "self-doubt" and interfaith dialogue and offers a constructive way forward.



The problems of religious pluralism can lead to distortion of our basic commitment to faith if we disregard the common pattern found in the historical approaches to other traditions – a shape he refers to as "final primacy."

Sumner concludes with the proposition that the challenge to our belief from Hindu, Buddhist, or Muslim should be received as a gift that leads us to "clarify anew the sole source of security ... that strips away all claim ... to superiority" opening the way to effectively proclaiming the grace received in "loving obedience to the One who is Alpha and Omega."

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AND IN ALL PLACES



✠ **MANY THANKS** to the nice person in Camdenton, Missouri, who sent OPERATION PASS ALONG 34 books, including the long-out-of-print "Beacon Lights of History" series. Also, to the anonymous donor from Little Rock who sent a carton of books including Mark Twain's *War Prayer*.

✠ **A TIP OF THE BIRETTA** to Sr. Letitia Prentice who celebrated her 50th Profession Anniversary in The Community of St. Mary at St. John's Chapel, DeKoven Center in Racine, Wisconsin.

✠ **ARCHBISHOP PETER CARNLEY**, head of the Anglican Church in Australia, has stepped down as Archbishop of Perth and Primate of Australia. Dr. Carnley was appointed Archbishop of Perth in 1981 and retired on the 24th Anniversary of his consecration and installation.

✠ **COOL WEBSITE:** The website of the American Religion Data Archive is found at www.thearda.com

✠ **THE PERSONAL EMERGENCIES FUND**, set up by the late Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Coggan in 1979, is supported by donations from individuals and churches and interest from investments. Over the past year it has helped 35 people but the needs have been great and the money is drying up fast. The fund urgently requires assistance to continue meeting the needs of Anglicans who lack basic medical care. If you would like to donate to the fund, please send checks (in US\$ or £UK only) made out to "The Personal Emergencies Fund" at the Anglican Communion Office, St. Andrew's House, 16 Tavistock Crescent, London W11 1AP, UK.

✠ **AN MP** has called for Church of England cathedrals to be stripped of their immunity and to be regulated properly in the forthcoming Charities Bill. Hugh Bayley, Labour MP for the

City of York, wants the system of self-regulation to end and cathedrals to be policed by the Charity Commission.

✠ AMERICAN bishops who would deny Holy Communion to pro-abortion Roman Catholic politicians are turning the Eucharist into a "political battleground", according to the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. The Most Rev. Diarmuid Martin said politicians must "make a conscientious decision" themselves over whether to receive Communion, as it is "very difficult" for priests to decide on "the state of the individual soul".

✠ NEW YORKERS flocked to visit a lavish new Mormon temple just off Broadway. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints dedicated the new temple on June 13, and it is now closed to non-church members. The temple's highlights include a baptismal font resting on 12 life-size oxen statues.

✠ MOSQUES in a city in Michigan have won the right

to broadcast the call to prayer. Hamtramck city council voted unanimously in favor of the move, overruling protests that the call was noise pollution and was offensive to non-Muslims.

✠ THE world's largest free online library dedicated to the Prophet Muhammad was launched in Saudi Arabia. The website, *Prophet Muhammad for All*, created by al-Islam Group, contains 50 books in several languages on the founder of Islam. The group's director, Muhammad Mateen Osmani, said: "We established the new website on the Prophet to propagate his message and teachings and we expect at least 500,000 visitors a year."

✠ MASKED demonstrators stormed a Roman Catholic cathedral in San Salvador, the Salvadoran capital. The protesters entered the cathedral and demanded that the country's new President withdraw troops from Iraq and reappoint dozens of sacked government officials. "This isn't the way to talk to the Gov-

ernment," President-elect Saca said.

the international community," Mr. Sahi said.

✠ TRADITIONAL religion is flourishing in China thanks to mobile phone technology, an anthropologist has found. Genevieve Bell, who is conducting research on behalf of the chipmaker, Intel, discovered that many Chinese people followed the lunar calendar via their mobiles. "Each night you get sent a list of things that are auspicious to do on the next day," she said. "You would have had a calendar on the walls. Now the phone has become the platform for it."

✠ A MAJOR landowner in the Indian holy city of Ayodhya has said that he is willing to give land to Muslims and Hindus close to a shrine disputed by members of the two faiths. Shivendra Pratap Sahi offered to hand over two 50-acre plots on which a mosque and a temple could be built. "A lot of blood has been shed over the dispute and it has sullied the image of the country in

✠ INDIAN officials are conducting DNA tests on Jains in an attempt to discover why followers of the faith have a higher mortality rate than the general population. The Kutchhi Dasha Oswal sect, had 203 deaths for every 150 births in 2002. The sect, which originated in Gujarat, has just 28,000 members left.

✠ THE Church of England is paying for a clergyman to do a doctorate in snowboarding. The Rev. Neil Elliot, chaplain at the University of Central England, became interested in the subject when, on a visit to Canada, he heard snowboarders describe the sport as "soul-riding." He said his doctorate would not be about technique. "It's more about the spirituality of snowboarding in lots of different ways," he added, "such as feeling closer to God and being in a beautiful setting. There's also an element of the risk you are taking."





DEATHS



✠ **THE REV. GEORGE MARTIN BEAN**, 85, in Lynchburg, Virginia. Fr. Bean served as chaplain at the US Military Academy, West Point, in the late 1950s. He also served parishes in Virginia and New Jersey in his 40 years of active service, retiring from St. John's, Lynchburg in 1983.

✠ **THE VERY REV. ROBERT BIZZARO**, 78, in South Bend, Indiana. Dean Bizzaro served parishes in New Jersey and Indiana before becoming Dean of the Cathedral of St. James, South Bend. In retirement he assisted at St. Paul's, Mishawaka. He was a member of the Order of St. Luke and was an associate of the Order of the Holy Cross.

✠ **THE REV. GORDON DAVID GRIFFITH**, 82, in Santa Rosa, California. Fr. Griffith was the Rector of St. Clement's Church, Berkeley, California from 1965 until 1988. He was involved in parish work and teaching in seminaries in Australia before coming to the

United States in 1963, where he was the Assistant Rector at Trinity, San Jose, before joining St. Clement's.

✠ **THE REV. GEORGE HELLER**, 50, in Topeka, Kansas. Fr. Heller who served parishes in Illinois and Kansas, was vicar of St. Philip's, Topeka at the time of his death. He was dean of the Northwest Convocation in the Diocese of Kansas.

✠ **THE REV. MARION G. MAILEY**, 71, in Youngstown, Ohio. She served parishes in the Dioceses of Chicago and Ohio. She also served as dean of the Waukegan Deanery and was a member of the commission on ministry.

✠ **THE REV. CANON WILLIAM WARD McCABE**, 86, in Santa Clara, California. A former professor at Madison College, Canon McCabe served as rector of parishes in Massachusetts, Virginia, and California. He also served as canon to the ordinary of the Diocese of California and as

archdeacon in the Diocese of El Camino Real.

✠ **THE REV. HOWARD CARLTON OLSEN**, 87, in Warwick, Rhode Island. Longtime rector of St. Barnabas, Warwick, Fr. Olsen also served in Providence and as ecumenical officer for the Diocese of Rhode Island.

✠ **THE REV. JOSEPH P. RUSSELL III**, 71, in Cleveland Heights, Ohio. After serving parishes in the Diocese of Oregon, Fr. Russell was assistant to the Bishop of Ohio for 20 years. He also served as canon of Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland, prior to his retirement.

✠ **THE REV. CHARLES M. SEYMOUR, JR.**, 93, in St. Augustine, Florida. In his 44 years of active service, Fr. Seymour served parishes in Tennessee, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida. He was also a trustee of the School of Theology of the University of the South.

✠ **THE REV. PRIM BAYARD SMITH, JR.**, 79, in New Orleans, Louisiana. A former assistant U.S. attorney in New Orleans, after being ordered

he served in Metairie and as chaplain at the LSU and Tulane Medical Schools. He also served as director of the Episcopal Ministry to Medical Education. He also chaired the diocesan committee on constitution and canons and served on the Presiding Bishop's National Advisory Committee for Ministry in Higher Education.

✠ **THE REV. WILL SPONG**, 70, in Austin, Texas. Longtime faculty member at the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest, he established a seminary-based Clinical Pastoral Education program and established the seminary's master of arts program in pastoral ministry.

✠ **THE REV. PAUL JAMES TENNANT**, 66, in Dallas, Texas. Ordained deacon in 2002, he served at St. Matthew's Cathedral, Dallas, and Church of the Redeemer in Irving.

✠ **THE REV. JOSEPH A. THOMPSON**, 97, in Topeka, Kansas. A social worker at Fort Leavenworth and Deacon

at Grace Cathedral, Topeka for many years, he was likely the longest term actively registered Boy Scout. He also served as first aid instructor for the American Red Cross and was active in the American Cancer Society.

✠ THE REV. BONNIE LUCILE VANDELINDER, 58, in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. She served parishes in New York while also working as assistant librarian at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School. At the time of her death, she was librarian and associate professor at Lutheran Theological Seminary as well as assistant at Prince of Peace in Gettysburg. She also served on diocesan commissions for the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania.

✠ THE REV. CANON LESLIE WILSON, 98, in Belleville, Illinois. Canon Wilson served parishes in Illinois, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. He was an honorary canon of St. Paul's Cathedral in Springfield.

✠ *May they rest in peace and rise in glory.* ✠



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Blessed By The Lord's Make-Over

A lot has happened which has shaken up our lives of late. Part of the global make-over this past year has been a questioning of Western values, philosophy, and lifestyle. We have to face the fact that there are many people in the world who, far from admiring and envying our way of life, regard it as corrupt and godless. But the global make-over is wider than this. The values of Western materialism, the ideological extremes of some philosophical, religious and political groups seem to have lead more to suffering than to joy. The truth is while we try to force happiness and rightness out of them, they will continue to fail us. If we do find passing delight in them, we'll soon find that only by letting go of that as well, will we find something more permanent, better, fulfilling.

Somewhere within us, we know this. Somewhere in the human heart is the sense that from a bleak dawn, there will yet rise a more glorious day.

We recognise the deepest longing of the human heart for a make-over of life, and in the silence of our souls, we wish to find what Mary found, to know what she knew and to hear what she heard.

And perhaps, we can and do stand where Mary stood. In the dark sorrow of her grief, when everything she thought she valued had been taken away, the raw emptiness of dawn, Mary heard nothing less than God calling her name. When her old life seemed of no worth any more, when she had nothing left to hang on to, then she heard the Lord's voice in the garden, then the Son of God rose transformed and made-over her life and the new day began. As we gather where prayers have been said unceasingly throughout the centuries, acknowledging the wretchedness of so much of our world, we too might indeed hear God calling our name. We too stand on the threshold of heaven and with all our hearts, we wish God to make-over our souls.

Let us, then, be quiet before the Lord and, let us hear him call our names. Let us relinquish the things that deafen us to his voice — the concerns of the present life, the wishing for things which can't be, the fear and anxiety which make us less noble and generous than we might be. Let us enter, all of us, into the joy of the Risen Lord. Let's all be blessed by the Lord's make-over. Let's all receive the riches of God's goodness. Let none of us lament, for the time of weeping is past and the day is at hand. Let none of us mourn, for pardon has dawned from the tomb. Let none of us fear sadness or death any longer, for the Saviour's death has set us free.

Every Sunday is the Feast of the Resurrection! Christ is risen and the darkness is overthrown, Christ is risen and the angels rejoice, Christ is risen and Life reigns. Christ is risen, he is risen indeed. Allelulia.

— The Rt. Rev. Tom Butler,
Bishop of Southwark, U.K.

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Preaching from Job

When I hear a good sermon on Job, I am struck by how contemporary are the issues it raises. The problem is, I don't hear many good sermons on Job! This is an opportunity lost, so I would like to reflect on some principles and practical suggestions that might help in preaching from Job.

Some guiding principles

Firstly, Job must be read as part of the wisdom strand in the Old Testament. It must be read against the backdrop of Proverbs, based on a doctrine of creation, concerned with issues of everyday life and faith, and presuming an orderly world in which the righteous prosper and the wicked are punished. Job is seemingly written in response to those who have misunderstood the partial perspectives of Proverbs, and turned them into rigid, calcified rules and promises. Job sits alongside Ecclesiastes as protest wisdom, asking hard questions about whether life can be mapped out so simply.

Secondly, Job must be read

as part of the Old Testament as a whole. The wisdom stream is generally not concerned with Old Testament staples like covenant, law, Israel, temple, sacrifices, exile, and land. However, the God of Job is the same as God of the rest of the Old Testament, and the book is primarily addressed to Israelites. It must not be interpreted in a way that contradicts the rest of the Old Testament.

Thirdly, Job must be interpreted and preached in the light of the coming of Christ. This does not mean that Job must be seen as a type of Christ, or that the final message of the book is found in Job's search for a redeemer, or his glimpses of resurrection. Rather, it is that the issues the book raises, and the answers it gives must be reframed by the clearer understanding of God's purposes in the coming, example, and teaching of Christ. In addition, what Christ has accomplished in his life, death, resurrection, and promised return transforms some of the issues that

plague Job in his struggle of faith.

Some practical issues

One problem in preaching on Job is that so much of it sounds the same. The dialogue (chapters 3-31) seems to go nowhere, with many of the same ideas surfacing repeatedly. It is hard to say, "This is my 17th sermon on the speeches of the friends," and expect a high level of listener interest. There is a need for variety in preaching and for the essential point to change from sermon to sermon. A useful way forward in Job is to identify distinct and discrete themes around which to fashion a sermon series. There are examples below, but I think it possible to develop a series from 3-10 weeks on Job, without repeating the same things.

It is vital to know the group, choose themes, and arrange applications accordingly. Large sections of text are used in preaching on Job. Rarely do we find a key truth neatly packaged in five verses. As a preaching unit, look at the

prologue, the epilogue, the Elihu speeches or Yahweh speeches, and so on. This means effective preaching often covers a few chapters at a time. It does not follow that all the text has to be read out in a church service. Sometimes it is enough to read the first part, the end of the section, or a string of passages through the sermon.

The preacher's task is to guide the congregation through a section, and fill in the gaps. This reinforces the value of integrating small group Bible study material for the parish with a sermon series. If mid-week Bible study groups are covering some of the details of the passages, larger chunks may be skipped on Sunday, knowing the rest can be picked up in another context. It reminds us of the value of doing a series on one book.

It is also vital to read any section of Job as part of the book as a whole. Indeed, Donald Gowan has written that "it may be questioned whether one can legitimately preach from any part of [the

book of Job] without taking the entire book as one's text." We need to be clear about how the book hangs together, and to communicate the flow and movement of the book to hearers.

Finally, in a sermon series, we need to focus away from the details of the dialogues, to the various answers and perspectives of the book. Many issues are explored in the dialogue, but they are often picked up in the chapters which follow.

Furthermore, it is often better to deal with the friends' speeches before preaching on Job's speeches. This makes it clear that Job's friends do not satisfactorily answer Job, and also highlights that Job, unlike his friends, speaks not only to the friends but also moves on to address God.

Here are some themes from Job to explore:

Is disinterested faith (faith with no strings attached) possible? (Job 1-2)

How not to care for those who are suffering (Lord, deliver me from my friends!)

Truth misapplied — the

advice of Job's friends

What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be faithful?

Is life worth living? What lies beyond death?

The experience of Job — being God's enemy; lessons learnt in suffering

Living with unanswered prayer — feeling cut off from God

What is wisdom? Is the fear of the Lord enough? (Job 28)

A righteous life (Job 31)

How does God run his world? Is there justice in the world?

God and creation (Job 38-41 — let God be God)

Is Job a person of faith? (Job 42)

It is possible to put together an interesting series of many weeks on the book of Job. There is room for creativity, but in each case there is a desire to draw out the distinct threads of the book, while giving the shape of the book as a whole.

— The Rev. Dr. Lindsay
Wilson, Vice-principal
of Ridley College, Melbourne

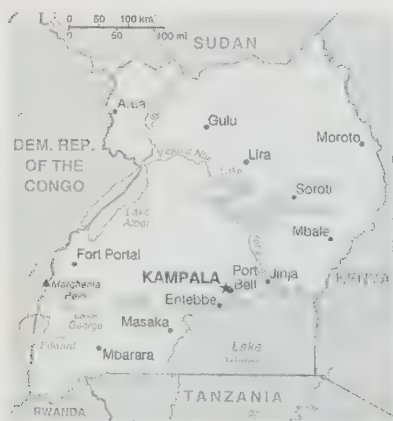
Reflections on a Trip to Uganda

I always tell people that one of the tasks of a bishop is to link the local church in with the Church worldwide. And what a thrilling task it is, too! On the last weekend of January, I found myself, with Bishop Ken Clarke, traveling to Uganda for the enthronement of the new archbishop, Henry Orombi. I have known Henry for twenty-four years, when he arrived as a student at St. John's College Nottingham. It was the end of the Amin period, and I recall well how he had left his wife behind, pregnant with her family in Northern

Uganda. One night as he watched the TV in England, he saw his own home village being looted, and the news said that many people had been killed. Henry said nothing, but went to his room and prayed, fearing that Phoebe and the children were dead. He heard nothing more for several weeks, when a lengthy letter arrived from a friend, and after several pages it ended by saying something like: I saw Phoebe and your new baby today.... They had escaped with their lives!

All of that is a wonderful testimony, but something sadder was to happen. When Phoebe and the children came to live in England the following year to be with Henry, they had the awful experience of finding the baby who had been safely born in Uganda, dead in her cot. I will never forget Henry carrying the little white coffin with his small child into the church. And I will never forget his utterly solid faith in the Lord.

So, here is a man as Archbishop of Uganda for



whom I have the profoundest love and respect. He is a God-given leader in the worldwide church at this time. He embodies the life and love of Jesus. And he leads a church which was born in suffering, with the martyrdom of more than twenty teenagers for their faith in Christ. His very enthronement was on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, the day on which Archbishop Janani Luwum, one of the most famous martyrs of the 20th century was enthroned 25 years ago.

Keep him and his church of 8 million Anglicans, in your prayers.

– *The Rt. Rev. Harold Miller,
Bishop of Down and
Dromore in Ireland*



Love, Of All Things

And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love (I Cor. 13:13).

Love is the premier virtue of the Christian life; indeed, it is

the *sine qua non*—the “without which nothing”—of Gospel religion. Moreover, it is apparent from Scripture, history, and our own experience, that love has the power to melt hardened hearts, rebuild bridges burnt long ago, alter cultures, and change human destinies.

There isn’t a professing Christian alive, regardless of how long he or she has been in the Faith, who would not wholeheartedly affirm the above sentiments. Nevertheless, as we take an honest, sober examination of our own homes, church, community, state, and country, and we discover that we are not having the influence on them we perhaps should be having, we cannot help but to arrive at the conclusion that something is amiss. The fault cannot lie with love. Therefore, either we have extricated love from the Gospel and relegated it to place of semi-importance, or we have yet to love with the singleness of mind and sacrificial determination believers are called to by God.

What is genuine love?

Firstly, love is a **decision of the will** and not merely a feeling.

We choose to love; we decide to love. Love is not a hierarchical destination to be arrived at by first going through acquaintance and friendship. It is possible to love someone you don't even know. Jesus commanded that we love those who hate us (Matt. 5:44). "Who is my neighbor? Who am I supposed to love?" the lawyer asked Jesus (Lk. 10:29). His answer? The Parable of the Good Samaritan—the point of which is that we are to love everyone God brings in our path. We choose to love others because God so loved us (I Jn. 4:19).

Secondly, love is **sacrificial**.

Genuine love always costs us something. It is precisely here that it differs so markedly from lust. Lust desires satiation for itself immediately; love gives and is patient "For God so loved the world, that He gave..." (Jn. 3:16). This is a hard pill to swallow, but in many ways love makes us vulnerable. If we love we give—and give, and give, and give.

We give without regard to our own resources, trusting God to take care of us as we are faithful and take care of others. If we love, we place ourselves in situations where we may suffer loss because those places are precisely where the love is required.

And thirdly, love is **selfless**.

Even the best of our human loves is tainted by self-interest. We love our spouses expecting to be loved a certain way in return. We love our children expecting they will be thankful and turn out a certain way. But the highest love, the love to which Christians are called, is a love that takes no thought for itself. "Love suffereth long, and is kind," Paul says; "love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (I Cor. 13:4,7) Love regards only the beloved; it is placing the needs, concerns, and welfare of the one being loved before those of the one loving.

This kind of love is a tall order indeed. Perhaps that is why it is so rare.

— *The Rev. Quintin Morrow,
St. Andrew's, Fort Worth, Texas*

It's Kisstomary to Cuss the Bride

Officiating at a wedding in the late 19th century, the Rev. William Archibald Spooner said to the shy and hesitant bridegroom, "Son, it is now kisstomary to cuss the bride." The good Anglican priest and Oxford University scholar, who was known for being genial, kindly, and hospitable, had quite the reputation for saying almost the right thing, but not quite. He once said to a stranger seated in the wrong place: "Mardon me padam, you're occupewing the wrong pie. May I sew you to another sheet?" He once told his congregation, "The Lord is a shoving leopard." These linguistic somersaults are called spoonerisms, named for the master of them all, the Rev. Spooner.

Other spoonerisms culled from Rinkworks.com and *The Reader's Digest*:

- "Those girls are sin twisters."
- To the college secretary, Spooner inquired of the dean, "Is the bean dizzy?"
- Spooner was very patriotic. During World War I he said, "When the boys come back from France, we'll have the hags flung out."
- "The enemy fled quickly from the ears and sparrows."
- "She joins this club over my bed doddy."
- Spooner introduced the old revival hymn as "Shall We Rather at the Giver?"
- "There is no peace in a home where a dinner swells."
- To a student who missed his history class, Spooner angrily said, "You have hissed my mystery lectures; you have tasted the whole worm."
- At a naval review, Spooner marveled at "this vast display of cattle ships and bruisers."
- Visiting a friend's country cottage, he exclaimed, "You have a nosy little cook here."



The Glory of God is Hidden in Suffering

Exodus 34:29-35, 2 Peter
1:13-21, Luke 9:28-36

We hear the story about a remarkable moment in the life of Jesus — the voice from the cloud that said to the disciples: "This is my Son, my Chosen One! Listen to him!" When this word is spoken with Moses and Elijah present, the message is that Jesus is now the one who speaks for God. The authority of Jesus is greater than the law of Moses and all the prophets, even Elijah who was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot. "This Jesus is my Chosen One," the divine voice says to the disciples, "listen to him." Like the Baptism of Jesus, the Transfiguration is a moment of recognition.

In every good novel or drama, there is a moment when the author lets the reader have a glimpse of the full identity of the central character. In the midst of the ministry of Jesus, the Gospel writers give us a glimpse of

the fuller story. Jesus, the teacher from Nazareth, is also from God. And he is destined to die. We are to listen to him. We still need to listen to Jesus because we believe he speaks for God. We also listen to him, as the writer of 2 Peter puts it, because Jesus is "a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your heart."

More of us have known what it is to live in a dark place. We have known, as the Collect puts it, "the quietude of this world." If you are out of work and discouraged about your future; if you are fearful about the dangers of living in an age of terrorism; if the death of a parent has shaken the foundation of your life, or if your health is fragile and you are worried about ever being well again, you understand very well what it is like to wait in a dark place until the morning star rises in your heart. Listen to Jesus. He will show you a way. If you listen to Jesus, you will also know that goodness is ultimately greater than evil and

reconciliation eventually trumps revenge even though it looks like the forces of evil are still winning. If we listen to Jesus, we will understand that the glory of God is hidden in suffering.

I am struck by the first seven words in our Gospel text. "About eight days after he said this." Jesus took some disciples with him away to pray. What had he said? And how is it related to the Transfiguration? Before they went up the mountain, as Luke tells the story, the disciples had listened to Jesus themselves. Jesus told them for the first time about his suffering and inevitable death. Jesus said this, "The Son of Man must suffer many things be repudiated by the religious leaders and be killed." The disciples were not ready to hear this. It is not surprising that Jesus took them away for a while.

But there was more. The sacrifice required of Jesus is also expected of his followers. Therefore, Jesus said to the disciples, Whoever strives to preserve their life will lose it and the one who

loses his life for my sake will save it. Whenever we cling to our possessions, when we hold on to our children, the partner we love, or our dearest friend, we are at greater risk of losing what we desire to keep. Jesus was quite clear about this — the only way to keep life is to give it away; the only way to hold on to life is to let it go. Faithful Christian living is about letting go rather than holding on.

There is a wonderful story about a Sufi master named Nasrudin. The Mulla Nasrudin was known far and wide for his wisdom. One day, a wealthy man had fallen in a pond and was thrashing about, crying out for help. People had gathered at the edge of the pond and were extending their hands to the wealthy man with a huge turban saying, "Give me your hand." He thrashed about even more. The Mulla Nasrudin happened by. He walked to the edge of the pond, reached out his hand to the wealthy man, and said, "Here, take my hand." Immediately the man took

hold of Nasrudin's hand and was pulled to safety. The people were astounded by the wisdom of the Mulla Nasrudin. "How did you do it," they asked. "It is simple," the Mulla said. I know this man. He is a miser. He would not give anyone anything. He was not about to give you his hand. So, when I said to him, "Here, take my hand," he was perfectly willing to take it. There are many times in our lives when we are invited to give ourselves away without knowing whether we will get anything back. Authentic spirituality is never stingy. Faithful Christian living is about letting go rather than holding on.

Jesus continued this conversation about his departure with Elijah and Moses on the mount. What matters most is not the dazzling raiment or his shining appearance. What matters most is the conversation that connects the future of Jesus with the past of Israel. Peter and his companions almost missed the moment. They had been sleeping. It may have been

fatigue or the altitude or plain avoidance. The disciples also slept, you will remember, when Jesus was agonizing about his death in the Garden of Gethsemane. In the Garden, the issue was avoidance and not altitude. On the Mount of Transfiguration, the disciples woke up just as Moses and Elijah were leaving the conversation. Once awake, the impulse was to preserve the moment they had almost missed. There would be no instant replay. It is of course a very human impulse to preserve the moment by pressing the rose or filling a box with memories. Whether it is a magical dinner with someone we love or a very good vacation or an experience of God's presence in a time of meditation, there is a natural desire to make it permanent.

My high-powered consultant daughter had been with 12 women including her mother for two days. "It was such a powerful gathering," she said. "I wish I could take the group with me all the time." "It is difficult to come down from a peak experi-

ence," my wife said when she came home from the same gathering. We are often sustained in the ordinary days by remembering a transcending moment or gathering when the ordinary is transformed by an extraordinary appearance of the Holy One. There are quite a few signs of the extraordinary or the supernatural in the Gospel readings. Jesus fed a huge crowd with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus walked on the water to the disciples in a boat and then stilled a storm. We have Moses with shiny skin because he had talked to God. In the Gospel, a voice speaks from the sky, Moses and Elijah appear in a cloud, and Jesus is transformed in the presence of Peter, James, and John. We have had quite a lot of supernatural stuff or peak experiences lately.

At a Bible Study, a person told a story from long ago. When her son was 4 years old, he developed viral meningitis. They rushed him to hospital but he died the next day. As they were leaving the hospital, hours after

his death, she saw Jesus holding her son as a vision in the sky. She knew then that her son would be cared for by Jesus forever. Seventy years later, she is still comforted by that image.

We need these transforming moments that strengthen our hope and sustain our souls through dark times. We may live off these transforming moments when life is particularly dreary and full of anxiety or despair. If we are waiting for the next remarkable moment, we may miss wonderfully ordinary things that happen in between. Peter's desire to preserve the peak experience is a common human response to an extraordinary moment. Peter and his companions heard Jesus say, just a few days before, that if you try to keep what you have, you will lose it. By seeking to make shelters or huts for Jesus and Moses and Elijah, they missed the message. Moreover, they skipped over the disturbing idea that their teacher would die and leave them and instead, they focused on the dazzle of the

Mountain. Once again, the disciples did not get it. Once again Peter gets the award for being human. You gotta love him. However, it is not possible and not even a good idea to bottle the magic moments of life or preserve the supernatural experience or keep the glory of God in a tent. Authentic spirituality does not and cannot depend on a permanent high.

The Transfiguration of our Lord is a remarkable supernatural moment of recognition that occurs between the first and second conversation by Jesus about his death. It is a dazzling moment in the midst of talk about death. Our lives are not much different. We have moments when we are aware of the supernatural presence of God in our daily experience of living with limits. Some of us know very personally about the "disquietude of this world." We have seen and heard a great deal about death of late. In the midst of that awareness, we look for moments that point to the transcending glory of God.

The glory of God is hidden

in suffering. The peak experiences or the transforming moments of our lives are hidden in an authentic life of loving and letting go. Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it. So Jesus said. We would do well to listen to him.

— *The Rev. Herbert Anderson,
Saint Mark's Cathedral, The
Diocese Of Olympia*

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From the Editor...

First Fruits Giving

Stewardship season still produces a lot of anxiety.

Maybe you know the story of a parishioner who became critically ill in hospital after a heart attack. While he was there, his bank informed his wife that he had inherited a million dollars. His wife, being concerned that the shock of the good news might kill him, asked their Episcopal priest to break the news to him as gently as possible.

"Doctor Jones," the minister said tactfully, "let us imagine for a moment that you have inherited a million dollars. What would you do with the money?"

Dr. Jones thought hard and long. "Father," he said, "money means little to me any more. I am quite certain I would give it all to the church."

The minister gulped, and staggered about the ward. Then he dropped over dead.

Now that didn't happen, but it hits close to home. Stewardship season is always a challenge, and this year I hope you will pray over the Old Covenant image of first fruits giving.

In one sense, in an agrarian society to give the first fruits or tenth of one's harvest to God was a statement that God came first. There was no way to know, when the first fruits were being harvested, what would happen with the rest at a later time — so it also spoke about trust.

But in Judaism there is more. In Jewish thought the

first consecrates the whole. For Hannah to give her first born, Samuel, to God, was her first fruits dedication to God of all her child-bearing capacity.

To give the first fruits reminds us that it is all God's and we are consecrating all to his glory.

Many years ago a missionary taught the people to whom he was ministering about first fruits giving.

One day there was a knock on the door of his hut. Answering, the missionary found one of the native boys holding a large fish in his hands. The boy said, "You taught us what tithing is, so here — I've brought you my tithe." As the missionary gratefully took the fish, he asked the young lad, "If this is your tithe, where are the other nine fish?" At this, the young boy beamed and said, "Oh, they're still in the river. I'm going back to catch them now."

The boy grasped the lesson exactly.

— KSH+

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